

Refugee Review Tribunal

AUSTRALIA

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: IDN17672
Country: Indonesia
Date: 1 December 2005

Keywords: Indonesia – Singkawang – Ethnic Chinese – Ethnic violence – State protection

This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

1. Where is Singawang or Singkawang, Indonesia?
2. Where is Setia Budi?
3. Is there any record of ethnic (racial), religious, or political violence in Singkawang or Setia Budi?
4. Are there any references to the authorities not protecting the Chinese in Kalimantan?

RESPONSE

1. Where is Singawang or Singkawang, Indonesia?

Singkawang is situated on the coast of West Kalimantan, about 100 kilometres north of Pontianak ('Singkawang' 2000, *Microsoft Encarta Interactive Atlas 2000* – Attachment 1; Whitton, P., Elliot, M., Greenaway, P., Jealous, V., O'Carroll, E., Ray, N., Tarbell, A. & Warren, M. 2003, *Lonely Planet: Indonesia*, Melbourne, 7th edition, November, p. 672 – Attachment 2). It is "a predominantly Hakka Chinese town" with a population of between 60,000 to 80,000 and an estimated ethnic Chinese population of 70% (Lonely Planet 2003, 'Indonesia', Melbourne, 7th edition, November, p. 680 – Attachment 2; Cohen, M. 2000, 'Cultural Revival – Raising the Lantern: Chinese culture in Indonesia glows brighter after decades of repression', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 2 October – Attachment 3).

2. Where is Setia Budi?

No record of a place called Setia Budi (or Setiabudi, Setia, or Budi) could be found in the sources consulted.

3. Is there any record of ethnic (racial), religious, or political violence in Singkawang or Setia Budi?

In West Kalimantan, the Dayak are an indigenous people who make up between 41 and 43 percent of the population, while only 2.75 percent of the population is Madurese. The balance is made up of Malays (*Melayu*), 39 percent, and ethnic Chinese, 13 percent (Human Rights Watch 1997, *West Kalimantan: Communal Violence in West Kalimantan*, Volume 9, No. 10, December, footnote 1 – Attachment 4). One report notes the Madurese are “devoutly Muslim” whilst the Dayaks are predominantly Christian” (Wilson, C. 2001, *Internal Conflict in Indonesia: Causes, Symptoms and Sustainable Resolution*, Department of the Parliamentary Library, 7 August, p. 13 – Attachment 5).

There is little evidence of religious violence in West Kalimantan. The prevailing view of analysts is that violence stems from economic and political grievances, as the government-sponsored transmigration program and aggressive government-backed commercial exploitation of natural resources interfered with their traditional ways of life, land usage, and economic opportunities of the Dayak population (U.S. Department of State 1999, *Indonesia Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998 – Indonesia*, February 26, Section 5 – Attachment 6). US Department of State 2005, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004 – Indonesia*, 28 February, section 1f. – Attachment 7: Wilson, C. 2001, *Internal Conflict in Indonesia: Causes, Symptoms and Sustainable Resolution*, Department of the Parliamentary Library, 7 August, p. 14 – Attachment 5). There is a long history of sporadic violence between the Madurese and Dayaks and Malays with communal conflict occurring in 1977, 1979, 1983 and 1992 (Wilson, C. 2001, *Internal Conflict in Indonesia: Causes, Symptoms and Sustainable Resolution*, Department of the Parliamentary Library, 7 August, p. 15 – Attachment 5). More recent uprisings occurred in 1996-7, 1999 and 2001 and are discussed briefly below. Information on the relatively harmonious position of the ethnic Chinese population in West Kalimantan in recent years is included in the final part of this section.

1996-1997 Uprisings

In West Kalimantan from late December 1996 through late February, an outburst of violence by indigenous Dayaks against immigrant Madurese resulted in a death toll of over 500 (Human Rights Watch 2003, *World Report 1998 – Indonesia and East Timor*, (source: Human Rights Watch, accessed 1999), 22 October, p. 6 – Attachment 8). It was reported that the conflict was initiated by a Madurese attack on a Catholic church (Wilson, C. 2001, *Internal Conflict in Indonesia: Causes, Symptoms and Sustainable Resolution*, Department of the Parliamentary Library, 7 August, p. 16 – Attachment 5).

Many political analysts believe the riots in Kalimantan in 1997 were facilitated by the armed forces, this time in an attempt to validate their extensive powers in the last days of the New Order regime (Van Klinken, G. 1997, ‘Tinder-box or conspiracy?’ *Inside Indonesia*, April-June <http://www.insideindonesia.org/edit50/riots.htm> – Accessed 23 November 2005 – Attachment 9; Human Rights Watch 1997, *West Kalimantan: Communal Violence in West Kalimantan*, Volume 9, No. 10 (C), December, p. Attachment 4). One report regarding the 1997 violence points to similarities with the 1967 massacre of the Chinese in Kalimantan noting, “the death toll, the use of rifles, and the geographic scope of the Dayak attacks on the Chinese are similar to the 1996-97 attacks on the Madurese” (Human Rights Watch 1997, *West Kalimantan: Communal Violence in West Kalimantan*, Volume 9, No. 10 (C), December, p. 13 – Attachment 4). Human Rights Watch commented “the Indonesian government did not instigate the initial clash, but its efforts to ban news coverage and discourage any investigation served to fuel rumours that exacerbated the conflict” (Human

Rights Watch 2003, *World Report 1998 – Indonesia and East Timor*, (source: Human Rights Watch, accessed 1999), 22 October, p. 6 – Attachment 8).

1999 Attacks

Malays joined the Dayaks in the attacks against the Madurese in West Kalimantan in 1999, resulting in an estimated death toll of 180 and causing thousands to flee the area. For further details on the 1999 clashes refer to the attachments ('Refugees flood Pontianak' 1999, *Indonesia-l* website, source: *Jakarta Post*, 24 March – Attachment 10; McBeth, J. and Cohen, M. 1999, 'Indonesia: Dayak Destruction: New ethnic violence erupts in Kalimantan', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 1 April – Attachment 11; '2,000 refugees brought to safety in Java' 1999, *Indonesia-l* website, source: Agence France-Presse, 28 March – Attachment 12). Analysts claim the Malays and Dayaks were agitating for a greater political role, signified by the burning of a government office in opposition to local elections in the West Kalimantan town of Mempawah in 1999 (Djalal, D. 2001, 'Indonesia: Deadly Revival', 29 March – Attachment 13; Davidson J.S. 2003, 'The politics of violence on an Indonesian periphery', *South East Asia Research*, Volume 11, Number 1, 1 March, pp. 83-84 – Attachment 30).

Country information confirms that in the 1999 uprising against the Madurese, the Armed Forces endeavoured to protect them, sending in "over 2,000 police and military personnel in the regency of 800,000 people" to protect over 10,000 Madurese who poured into this city ('Refugees flood Pontianak' 1999, *Indonesia-l* website, source: *Jakarta Post*, 24 March – Attachment 10; McBeth, J. and Cohen, M. 1999, 'Indonesia: Dayak Destruction: New ethnic violence erupts in Kalimantan', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 1 April – Attachment 11). However, this was not sufficient to stop the murder, mutilation decapitation and reported cases of ritual tribal cannibalism, of the Madurese ('2,000 refugees brought to safety in Java' 1999, *Indonesia-l* website, source: Agence France-Presse, 28 March – Attachment 12).

2001 Violence

In February and March 2001 Dayak tribesmen killed between 400-600 Madurese migrant settlers and burned more than 1,000 houses and stores in Central Kalimantan (US Department of State 2002, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2001 – Indonesia*, 4 March, section 1 a. – Attachment 14) (Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC), 2004, *Time For The United Nations To Act On The 1965-66 Massacre In Indonesia*, 3 March – Attachment 15; Purdey, J. 2001, 'Update for Refugee Review Tribunal on the Situation of Ethnic Chinese and Christians in Indonesia', University of Melbourne, June – Attachment 16). The ethnic violence prompted approximately 130,000 ethnic Madurese migrants to leave. At least 45,000 voluntarily returned to Kalimantan and there "were reports from local NGO's, provincial officials, and local press of Dayaks killing an unknown number of Madurese attempting to return to Central Kalimantan" (US Department of State 2002, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2001 – Indonesia*, 4 March, section 1 a. – Attachment 14; US Department of State 2005, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004 – Indonesia*, 28 February, section 2d. – Attachment 7).

Relations between the two groups also remained poor in West Kalimantan, where former residents of Madurese descent were obstructed in their attempts to reclaim their property and the West Kalimantan city of Sambas remained effectively inaccessible to its former Madurese residents (US Department of State 2005, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004 – Indonesia*, 28 February, section 5:1d. – Attachment 7).

There were reports that police were slow to respond to the killing of the Madurese in 2001 due to the fact that the Government had become ineffective in enforcing the law against criminal violence (US Department of State 2002, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2001 – Indonesia*, 4 March, introduction and section 1 a. – Attachment 14). For example, in March 2001, in Central Kalimantan's capital Palangkaraya, protesters took the deputy police chief hostage, demanding the release of 38 people detained for allegedly starting the riots (Djalal, D. 2001, 'Indonesia: Deadly Revival', 29 March – Attachment 13).

Situation of the ethnic Chinese

Most reports note there have not been any incidents of violence targeting the ethnic Chinese in West Kalimantan. The relationship between Indonesian Chinese and other ethnic groups in Kalimantan is often cited as one region where relations are good. However, in October-November 1967 there was a period of violence in which about 300 were killed and more than 55,000 Chinese displaced. This was an ethno-political uprising by the Dayak people against Communist guerrillas who had strong support among the local ethnic Chinese, however, no distinction was made as to the political affiliations of those attacked (Human Rights Watch 1997, *West Kalimantan: Communal Violence in West Kalimantan*, Volume 9, No. 10 (C), December, p. 3:12 – Attachment 4; Davidson J.S. 2003, 'The politics of violence on an Indonesian periphery', *South East Asia Research*, Volume 11, Number 1, 1 March, p. 62 – Attachment 30).

However, in recent decades there have been no incidents of communal conflict against the ethnic Chinese in West Kalimantan, even in 1998 when there were anti-Chinese riots in many other parts of Indonesia. In this regard, one analyst claims, the "history and the social, economic and political conditions of ethnic Chinese in West Kalimantan are different from those of ethnic Chinese in other regions, particularly in Java". In particular he notes that whilst there are very rich Chinese in West Kalimantan on average they belong to the lower middle class, compared to Java where many belong to the upper middle class (Petebang, E. 2000, 'Chinese New Year significant in Pontianak' *Jakarta Post*, Indonesia-L website – Attachment 17).

Country information does not suggest the ethnic Chinese were targeted in any of the attacks since 1996 in Kalimantan. The reports claim that the Dayaks and Malays attacked the Madurese and one report regarding the 1997 violence notes "the Chinese hung a strip of red cloth on their doors" to identify themselves as ethnic Chinese so as to avoid attacks (Human Rights Watch 1997, *West Kalimantan: Communal Violence in West Kalimantan*, Volume 9, No. 10 (C), December, p.4 – Attachment 4).

Interestingly, a 1999 US Department of State report claims "that tension often is expressed along racial/ethnic lines as developers are frequently ethnic Chinese Indonesians" in West Kalimantan (U.S. Department of State 1999, *Indonesia Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998*, February 26, Section 5 – Attachment 6). However, other reports from the same period do not mention any antagonism towards the Chinese in Kalimantan and note that ethnic Chinese were not targeted when violence erupted (DIMIA Country Information Service 2000, *Country Information Report No. 310/99 – Chinese Emigration*, (sourced from DFAT advice of 6 August 1999, CIR Preparation 30 March – Attachment 18). Further, subsequent reports from the US Department of State have deleted this statement.

Similarly, the Chinese were not targeted in the 2001 attacks in Central Kalimantan although many were afraid for their safety and fled the conflict areas. However one report claims that the anti-Chinese sentiment associated with their economic position, still remains an issue in this province, citing the following comments made by Dayak leaders, “if the Dayaks were motivated by social jealousy, we would have attacked the Chinese not the Madurese.” (Purdey, J. 2001, ‘Update for Refugee Review Tribunal on the Situation of Ethnic Chinese and Christians in Indonesia’, University of Melbourne, June – Attachment 16).

4. Are there any references to the authorities not protecting the Chinese in Kalimantan?

Discrimination

An October 2000 article in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* provides a brief background on banning of Chinese culture and language following the attempted coup in 1965 and also moves to remove legal discrimination since 2000 (Cohen, M. 2000, ‘Cultural Revival – Raising the Lantern: Chinese culture in Indonesia glows brighter after decades of repression’, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 2 October – Attachment 3). Reports indicate that since the 1998 riots, progress has been made to minimise discriminatory practices towards ethnic Chinese (Utama, M. 2003, Email: ‘RE: RRT Information Request: IDN16252 – update on ethnic Chinese in Indonesia’, 3 November – Attachment 19) but there are still many instances of discrimination and harassment with some Chinese representatives claiming, “there is no political will on the part of some government officials” (Saraswati, M.S. 2004, ‘Chinese-Indonesians long for end to discrimination’, *Jakarta Post* website, 21 January – Attachment 20).

A Freedom House report, dated June 2003, stated “ethnic Chinese make up less than 3 percent of the nation’s population, but are resented by some Indonesians for holding the lion’s share of private wealth” (Freedom House 2003, *Freedom in the World – Indonesia*, 13 June – Attachment 21). According to Benedict Anderson, “[t]he New Order allowed the Chinese to flourish economically, but it politically marginalised them, making them extremely vulnerable as a group” (Varshney, A. Panggabean, R. & Tadjoeidin, M.Z. 2004, ‘Patterns of Collective Violence in Indonesia (1990-2003)’, UN Support Facility for Indonesian Recovery website, UNSFIR Working Paper 04/03, July, p. 29 – Attachment 22; see also: International Crisis Group 2001, *Indonesia: Violence and Radical Muslims*, 10 October, p.6 – Attachment 31).

Anti-Chinese rioting was not uncommon during the three decades of rule by Soeharto’s New Order. One report notes that there were frequent clashes, however, were usually controlled quickly partly because local military and police units depended on regular financial contributions from local Chinese business (International Crisis Group 2001, *Indonesia: Violence and Radical Muslims*, 10 October, p.6 – Attachment 31). The same report claims that during the last few years of the Soeharto era anti-Chinese rioting became more common and “appeared to be related to rivalries between military factions over the coming succession” (International Crisis Group 2001, *Indonesia: Violence and Radical Muslims*, 10 October, p.6 – Attachment 31).

The 1998 anti-Chinese riots

An estimated 1190 were killed in Jakarta and 168 women gang-raped in the May 1998 riots,

which targeted the Chinese community. None of these crimes have been properly investigated (Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC) 2004, *Time For The United Nations To Act On The 1965-66 Massacre In Indonesia*, 3 March – Attachment 15).

A 2003 RRT Country Research response discusses the general situation of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia until May 2003. In relation to the 1998 anti-Chinese riots the conclusion by many international bodies is that the authorities did not protect the Chinese, especially the army by their passive action at the time and the government in not wielding its full authority to investigate (RRT Country Research 2003, *Research Response IDN15918*, 27 May – Attachment 23).

Numerous reports point to the collusion of the New Order regime in inciting attacks against the ethnic Chinese, with political observers claiming the riots “were the final attempt by Suharto’s most reactionary supporters to stir up trouble, rather than any expression of popular hatred of the Chinese” (Johnston, T. 2005, ‘Chinese Diaspora: Indonesia’, *BBC* website, 3 March <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4312805.stm> – Accessed 17 November 2005 – Attachment 24). Other reports claims that “the military encouraged civilians to rape and kill ethnic Chinese Indonesians, and destroy their property” (Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC) 2004, *Time For The United Nations To Act On The 1965-66 Massacre In Indonesia*, 3 March – Attachment 15; Tesoro, J. 2000, ‘The Scapegoat?’, *Asiaweek*, March 3, Vol. 26, No. 8 – Attachment 25); Human Rights Watch (undated), *Indonesia: The Damaging Debate on Rapes of Ethnic Chinese Women* – Attachment 26; Ocorandi, M. 1998, ‘An Anatomy of The Recent Anti Ethnic-Chinese Riots in Indonesia: Somewhere in Southeast Asia’, FICA (Fellowship of Indonesian Christians in America) website, 20 March <http://www.fica.org/prototype/may-riots/anatomy.htm> – Accessed 17 November 2005 – Attachment 27).

Kalimantan

Many sources note the relatively harmonious relationship between the ethnic Chinese and other ethnic groups in Kalimantan, citing the fact that the Chinese were not targeted in Kalimantan. West Kalimantan, especially the city of Singkawang, is regarded as one of the safest places for the Chinese to reside in Indonesia (Varshney, A. Panggabean, R. & Tadjoeidin, M.Z. 2004, ‘Patterns of Collective Violence in Indonesia (1990-2003)’, UN Support Facility for Indonesian Recovery website, UNSFIR Working Paper 04/03, July, p.20 – Attachment 22; ‘Ethnic Chinese flock to West Kalimantan province’ 1998, *Bisnis Indonesia*, 7 July – Attachment 28; Ranik, Erma S. 2000, ‘Chinese influence pervades Singkawang’, *Jakarta Post*, 29 September – Attachment 29).

As previously noted the Chinese community in Indonesia and, especially, in West Kalimantan were targeted between 1966-1976 (Varshney, A. Panggabean, R. & Tadjoeidin, M.Z. 2004, ‘Patterns of Collective Violence in Indonesia (1990-2003)’, UN Support Facility for Indonesian Recovery website, UNSFIR Working Paper 04/03, July, p.16 – Attachment 22).

It is now widely believed the massacre was deliberately sparked by the army who specifically sought the assistance of the Dayak population in the killings. The army passed out Garand rifles to Dayak families to facilitate what the military called a “clean-up” operation, and by November, the death toll was at least 300, with 55,000 ethnic Chinese displaced from the interior to coastal towns where shortage of food and medical supplies caused more deaths

(Human Rights Watch 1997, *West Kalimantan: Communal Violence in West Kalimantan*, Volume 9, No. 10 (C), December, p.3: 12 – Attachment 4; Davidson J.S. 2003, ‘The politics of violence on an Indonesian periphery’, *South East Asia Research*, Volume 11, Number 1, 1 March, p. 62-3 – Attachment 30; Ranik, Erma S. 2000, ‘Chinese influence pervades Singkawang’, *Jakarta Post*, 29 September – Attachment 29). The massacre has never been investigated by the state (Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC), 2004, *Time For The United Nations To Act On The 1965-66 Massacre In Indonesia*’, 3 March – Attachment 15).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au>

UNHCR *REFWORLD* UNHCR Refugee Information Online

Databases:

Public	<i>FACTIVA</i>	Reuters Business Briefing
DIMIA	<i>BACIS</i>	Country Information
	<i>REFINFO</i>	IRBDC Research Responses (Canada)
RRT	<i>ISYS</i>	RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i> .
RRT Library	<i>FIRST</i>	RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. ‘Singkawang’ 2000, *Microsoft Encarta Interactive Atlas 2000*. (CDROM)
2. Whitton, P., Elliot, M., Greenaway, P., Jealous, V., O’Carroll, E., Ray, N., Tarbell, A. & Warren, M. 2003, *Lonely Planet: Indonesia*, Melbourne, 7th edition, November. (RRT Library)
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